

Message Text

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ACTION EA-13

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ADP-00 AID-10 PM-03 CIAE-00 INR-10

NSAE-00 RSC-01 NSC-10 NSCE-00 DODE-00 L-02 PRS-01 H-01

RSR-01 IGA-01 /068 W

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R 130429Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5856

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 14566

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: EAID, PINS, VS

SUBJECT: RD/STRD CADRE

REF: STATE 154999

1. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A LONG TIME, AND QUITE POSSIBLY THE LAST FOR A LONG TIME, I AM GRATEFUL TO THE NEW YORK TIMES. ITS PUBLICATION OF THE ARTICLE BY ONE OF ITS SAIGON CORRESPONDENTS, MR. FOX BUTTERFIELD, DEALING WITH THE ALLEGED CONVERSION OF THE RD/STRD CADRE INTO "ORGANIZERS FOR MR. THIEU'S NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY", THE AUTOMATIC KNEE-JERK REACTION OF THE WASHINGTON BUREAUCRACY EVIDENCED IN JOINT AID/STATE/DOD REFTEL, AND THE INTENSE ANGERED RESPONSE OF EVERY CONCERNED ELEMENT OF THE US DIPLOMATIC MISSION TO THAT REACTION, HAS BEEN AN ILLUMINATING AND CONSTRUCTIVE EXPERIENCE.

2. IN THE LITTLE MORE THAN THREE WEEKS I HAVE BEEN HERE, I HAD NOT YET GOTTEN ROUND TO EXAMINING THE RD/STRD PROGRAM IN DEPTH. I HAVE NOW DONE SO. I HAVE DETERMINED THAT IT IS ESSENTIAL, THAT IT IS WORKING BETTER THAN WE MIGHT HAVE EXPECTED, THAT CONTINUED SUPPORT WOULD BE IN OVERALL US INTERESTS, EVEN IF WE WERE NOT ALREADY FORMALLY COMMITTED TO SUCH SUPPORT THROUGH JUNE 30 NEXT YEAR.

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3. CONSEQUENTLY, IN THE COURSE OF A CALL ON PRESIDENT THIEU SATURDAY ON OTHER MATTERS, I INFORMED HIM THAT I WISHED TO EXPRESS MY REGRETS THAT A BUREAUCRATIC FOUL-UP HAD DELAYED OUR PROVISION OF FUNDS AFTER JULY 1 RESULTING IN A PARTIAL UNFUNDING OF RD CADRES FOR JULY. I ASSURED HIM THAT THE COMMITMENT WE HAD FORMALLY MADE BY MEANS OF THE LETTER OF AUGUST 18, 1970, FROM MACV TO THE MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT WAS, OF COURSE, A BINDING COMMITMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES AND WOULD, OF COURSE, BE COMPLETELY HONORED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE. WE THEN WENT ON TO DISCUSS MORE IMPORTANT THINGS AS I HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED BY WASHINGTON TO DO.

4. AS SOME IN WASHINGTON ALREADY KNOW, AND OTHERS WILL LEARN, I HAVE RATHER FIRM CONVICTIONS ON THE INTEGRITY OF THE COMMITMENTS THIS GOVERNMENT MAKES. I WILL NOT PERMIT ANY MEMBER OF THIS MISSION TO MAKE EVEN AN IMPLIED COMMITMENT WITHOUT THOROUGH AND TOTAL CONSIDERATION, WITHOUT THE APPROVAL OF THE WASHINGTON AGENCIES CONCERNED, AND WITHOUT APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL SANCTION WHERE REQUIRED. ONCE MADE, HOWEVER, I WILL NOT PERMIT ANY UNILATERAL ABROGATION OF SUCH A COMMITMENT. IN MY REMARKS TO PRESIDENT THIEU, I MADE NO NEW COMMITMENT. I SIMPLY REITERATED A BINDING COMMITMENT ALREADY MADE. THEREFORE, I DESIRE THE PROVISION SOONEST OF THE \$4.2 MILLION FROM DOD TO DISCHARGE THIS PRESENT COMMITMENT.

5. I ALSO NOTE THE LAST SENTENCE OF REFTEL STATING THAT "NEITHER DOD NOR AID PLANS TO CONTINUE ANY SUPPORT FOR RD/STRD CADRE FOR FY 75 OR BEYOND." I PASS OVER THE ARROGANCE OF THE ASSUMPTION THAT THE AUTHORS OF THAT SENTENCE SO BOUNTIFULLY POSSESS SUFFICIENT QUANTITIES OF THE "REVEALED TRUTH" THAT THIS FIRM DECISION CAN BE MADE NOW. WE ARE A BIT MORE HUMBLE HERE IN SAIGON. WE WILL WATCH, WE WILL OBSERVE, WE WILL ANALYZE, AND THEN ONLY WILL WE RECOMMEND WHAT WE BELIEVE WILL BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE UNITED STATES. AND I RATHER SUSPECT THE EVENTUAL DECISION WILL BE MADE AT A SOMEWHAT HIGHER LEVEL.

6. THIS LEADS TO ONE FINAL OBSERVATION. THE BUTTERFIELD STORY WAS APPARENTLY BASED ON A SINGLE VILLAGE IN ALL OF SOUTH VIETNAM, LONG TRACH VILLAGE, LONG AN PROVINCE. EVEN IN THIS NARROW CONTEXT THE ARTICLE WAS INACCURATE. UNLIKE THE NEW YORK TIMES
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AND ITS REPORTERS HERE WHO FOLLOW ITS EDITORIAL LEAD, THIS MISSION HAS NO EMOTIONAL INVOLVEMENT IN A NORTH VIETNAMESE VICTORY. UNLIKE THE NEW YORK TIMES AND ITS REPORTERS HERE, WHO APPARENTLY SEEK THE DOWNFALL OF THE CURRENT SOUTH VIETNAMESE LEADER AS PERHAPS THE QUICKEST WAY TO PROVE THE CORRECTNESS OF THEIR CONSISTENT CONCLUSION THAT A NORTH VIETNAMESE VICTORY IS INEVITABLE, THIS MISSION HAS NO EMOTIONAL INVOLVEMENT IN ANY PARTICULAR VIETNAMESE LEADER. OUR ONLY EMOTIONAL INVOLVEMENT

IS THE INTERESTS OF THE UNITED STATES.

7. OUR REPORTING, THEREFORE, WILL NOT TAKE AN ISOLATED EXAMPLE AND EXTRAPOLATE IT CLEVERLY AS REPRESENTATIVE OF THE WHOLE COUNTRY. ON THE CONTRARY, AS LONG AS I AM HERE, THIS MISSION'S REPORTING WILL RECORD, AS HONESTLY, OBJECTIVELY AND COMPLETELY AS IT IS HUMANLY POSSIBLE TO DO, THE TOTALITY OF THE PERSON OF VIETNAM, NOT JUST ITS WARTS, BUT ITS ANATOMY, ITS PHYSIOLOGY, ITS PSYCHE, WHAT REALLY MAKES IT TICK AND WHERE IT IS REALLY LIKELY TO GO. FOREIGN SERVICE REPORTING AT ITS BEST HAS BEEN THE BEST IN THE WORLD AND THIS IS THE GOAL WE WILL STRIVE FOR HERE.

8. THEREFORE, I VENTURE THE SUGGESTION THAT A GREAT DEAL OF TIME WILL BE SAVED ALL AROUND IF WASHINGTON WILL PAY MORE ATTENTION TO THE MISSION REPORTING AND LESS TO THE WART AND PROTCOLOGICAL EXAMINATIONS BY THE NEW YORK TIMES AND OTHERS WHICH, WHILE QUITE POSSIBLY FASCINATING TO MASOCHISTS WITH MORBID TASTES, ARE USUALLY IRRELEVANT TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT IS REALLY HAPPENING IN VIETNAM. IT OUGHT TO BE RECALLED THAT IT WAS THIS KIND OF WASHINGTON BUREAUCRACY REACTION TO THIS KIND OF SAIGON PRESS REPORTING A DECADE AGO WHICH HELPED US SLIDE INTO THE MESS FROM WHICH WE ARE NOW EXTRICATING OURSELVES AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. FORTUNATELY, THE RVN SEEMS, FROM EVERY OBJECTIVE TEST, TO HAVE A FAR BETTER CHANCE FOR SURVIVAL THAN ANYONE HAD ANY REASONABLE RIGHT TO EXPECT. THEREFORE, I HAVE NO INTENTION OF PERMITTING US TO PARTICIPATE IN A PROCESS WHICH WOULD ONCE AGAIN VALIDATE SANTAYANA'S OBSERVATION THAT THOSE WHO REFUSE TO LEARN FROM HISTORY ARE CONDEMNED TO REPEAT IT.

9. OTHER COMMENTS IN THIS CABLE SHOULD NOT DIVERT ATTENTION FROM UTTER SERIOUSNESS WHICH MUST BE GIVEN TO PARAGRAPHS THREE AND FOUR ABOVE, AND PARTICULARLY TO THE LAST LINE OF PARAGRAPH FOUR.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 AUG 1973
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973SAIGON14566
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS MARTIN
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: SAIGON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730841/aaaabecc.tel
Line Count: 155
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: STATE 154999
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 06 DEC 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <06-Dec-2001 by shawdg>; APPROVED <28 FEB 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RD/STRD CADRE
TAGS: EAID, PINS, VS
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005